

CLAIMS

What is claimed is:

1. A data delivery mechanism having represented therein:
 - (A) a content item; and
 - (B) an info segment including,
 - (1) a plurality of ad entries, each ad entry including,
 - (a) an interruption point specifier indicating a point during play of the content item at which play should be interrupted and an advertisement played instead.
2. The data delivery mechanism of claim 1 wherein the info segment further includes:
a content identifier which associates the info segment with the content item.
3. The data delivery mechanism of claim 1 wherein at least one of the plurality of ad entries further includes:
 - (b) a maximum interruption length specifier indicating a maximum duration of play of the advertisement, after which play of the content item should be resumed even if the advertisement has not completed.
4. The data delivery mechanism of claim 1 wherein at least one of the plurality of ad entries further includes:
 - (c) a resume indicator enabling a user to override play of the advertisement.
5. The data delivery mechanism of claim 1 wherein at least one of the plurality of ad entries further includes:
 - (d) an ad type specifier which prevents an advertisement from interrupting the content item if the advertisement meets a predetermined criterion.
6. The data delivery mechanism of claim 1 wherein at least one of the plurality of ad entries further includes:

(e) an ad lock specifier which permits an advertisement to be skipped if a predetermined criterion is met.

7. The data delivery mechanism of claim 1 wherein at least one of the plurality of ad entries further includes:

(b) a maximum interruption length specifier indicating a maximum duration of play of the advertisement, after which play of the content item should be resumed even if the advertisement has not completed;

(c) a resume indicator enabling a user to override play of the advertisement;

(d) an ad type specifier which prevents an advertisement from interrupting the content item if the advertisement meets a predetermined criterion; and

(e) an ad lock specifier which permits an advertisement to be skipped if a predetermined criterion is met.

8. The data delivery mechanism of claim 7 wherein the info segment further includes: a content identifier which associates the info segment with the content item.

9. A data delivery mechanism having represented therein an info segment comprising:

(1) a plurality of ad entries, each ad entry having,

(a) an interruption point specifier indicating a point during play of a content item at which play should be interrupted and an advertisement played instead.

10. The data delivery mechanism of claim 9 wherein the info segment represented therein further comprises:

a content identifier which associates the info segment with a predetermined content item.

11. The data delivery mechanism of claim 9 wherein the info segment represented therein further comprises at least one of the plurality of ad entries further having:

(b) a maximum interruption length specifier indicating a maximum duration of play of the advertisement, after which play of the content item should be resumed even if the advertisement has not completed.

12. The data delivery mechanism of claim 9 wherein the info segment represented therein further comprises at least one of the plurality of ad entries further having:

(c) a resume indicator enabling a user to override play of the advertisement.

13. The data delivery mechanism of claim 9 wherein the info segment represented therein further comprises at least one of the plurality of ad entries further having:

(d) an ad type specifier which prevents an advertisement from interrupting the content item if the advertisement meets a predetermined criterion.

14. The data delivery mechanism of claim 9 wherein the info segment represented therein further comprises at least one of the plurality of ad entries further having:

(e) an ad lock specifier which permits an advertisement to be skipped if a predetermined criterion is met.

15. The data delivery mechanism of claim 9 wherein the info segment represented therein further comprises at least one of the plurality of ad entries further having:

(b) a maximum interruption length specifier indicating a maximum duration of play of the advertisement, after which play of the content item should be resumed even if the advertisement has not completed;

(c) a resume indicator enabling a user to override play of the advertisement;

(d) an ad type specifier which prevents an advertisement from interrupting the content item if the advertisement meets a predetermined criterion; and

(e) an ad lock specifier which permits an advertisement to be skipped if a predetermined criterion is met.

16. The data delivery mechanism of claim 9 wherein the info segment represented therein further comprises:

a content identifier which associates the info segment with a predetermined content item.

17. A data delivery mechanism having represented therein:

a plurality of segments of a program; and

interlaced between the segments of the program, a plurality of info segment pointers each providing access to an info segment which is external to the data delivery mechanism and which includes,

a content identifier associating the info segment with the program, and

a plurality of entries, each entry specifying,

an interruption point at which play of the program should be interrupted and a commercial should be played, and

one or more conditions controlling the interruption.

18. The data delivery mechanism of claim 17 wherein the one or more conditions comprise:

whether a user can override insertion of the commercial;

whether a particular type of commercial is allowed to be played at the interruption point; and

whether the commercial can be skipped by virtue of a financial payment.

19. A data delivery mechanism having represented therein an electronic programming guide comprising:

a plurality of program identifications; and

a plurality of info segments, each info segment including,

a program identification associating the info segment with a predetermined one of the plurality of program identifications, and

a plurality of interruption point specifiers which indicate points at which, during play of a predetermined program identified by the predetermined one of the plurality of program identifications, play of the program should be interrupted for play of an advertisement.

20. The data delivery mechanism of claim 19 wherein:

at least one of the info segments represented therein further includes a maximum interruption length specifier;

at least one of the info segments represented therein further includes a permitted ad type specifier;

at least one of the info segments represented therein further includes a prohibited ad type specifier; and

at least one of the info segments represented therein further includes an ad lock specifier.

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